



Covid-19 impacts on UArctic Thematic Networks and Institutes – A survey

The purpose of the survey was to collect information on how Covid-19 pandemic has affected Thematic Networks and UArctic Institutes' operations, what new ways of actions are implemented and how the UArctic Thematic Network Office could support networks better. The survey (see Attachment 1) was open for response during the months of July/August 2020 and it was closed at the end of August 2020. The survey was open and directed to all members of all UArctic Thematic Networks (TNs) and Institutes.

The results of the survey were collected and combined by the UArctic Thematic Networks and Research Liaison Office's team. The results are openly shared with, and they are available to, all UArctic Thematic Networks (TNs) and Institutes.

Survey Short Report

The **total number** of the respondents of the survey was **19**.

Among those, **14** have the role as a Leader (74%), **1** a Vice-Leader (5%), **1** a Coordinator/Assistant (5%) and **3** are Members of the Network (16%).

On the axis (from 1 to 10) evaluating how Covid-19 has effected the activities (either planned or current) of the Thematic Networks (TNs)/Institutes during Jan-Dec 2020, the average value was **6,37** – where 1 (minimum value 'No effects at all') while 10 (maximum value 'Major effects'). More in details, 4 respondents affirmed that Covid-19 had no effect at all on their activities (slider value quantity 1), while 5 respondents informed that it had major effects (slider value quantity 10).

What and how TNs' activities were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic

The following series of questions aimed at looking more in detail at the impacts of Covid-19 on activities either planned or conducted by TNs and Institutes. The time frame was the year 2020.

The respondents could choose between two sentences, one stating that the activity was pursued as planned, while the second sentence described the activities' changes caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. A third option was available in case the listed activity was neither planned nor conducted in 2020.

The majority of respondents (n=14) affirmed that face-to-face courses and field school were not planned in 2020, while 5 of the respondents informed that they had to cancel those due to Covid-19. Based on 5 responses, 0.8 courses were cancelled due to Covid-19 on average (see Figure 1).



Likewise, 13 respondents stated that the planned meeting/workshop with partners had to be cancelled, while only 1 was able to hold it face-to-face as planned so that 2 meetings were cancelled on average during 2020. The rest of the respondents (5) did not plan any meeting/workshop with partners during this same year (see Figure 1).

Also, most of the respondents did not plan or conduct any face-to-face course/field school (n=14), other course/field school (n=14) or meeting/workshop/congress or similar (n=12) during year 2020. Still, 3 respondents changed face-to-face course/field school to online course (one course moved online on average), while only 2 respondents did not move any courses online. Similarly, 4 respondents had to postpone the planned course/field work until further notice (0.75 on average) and 6 respondents changed and organized meeting/workshop or similar to online events (1.33 meetings on average) (see Figure 1).

Moreover, 15 respondents had to postpone planned meeting/workshop/congress, with an average of 1.6 meetings, etc. postponed. Only 1 organized it as planned, while the rest did not plan any (see Figure 1).

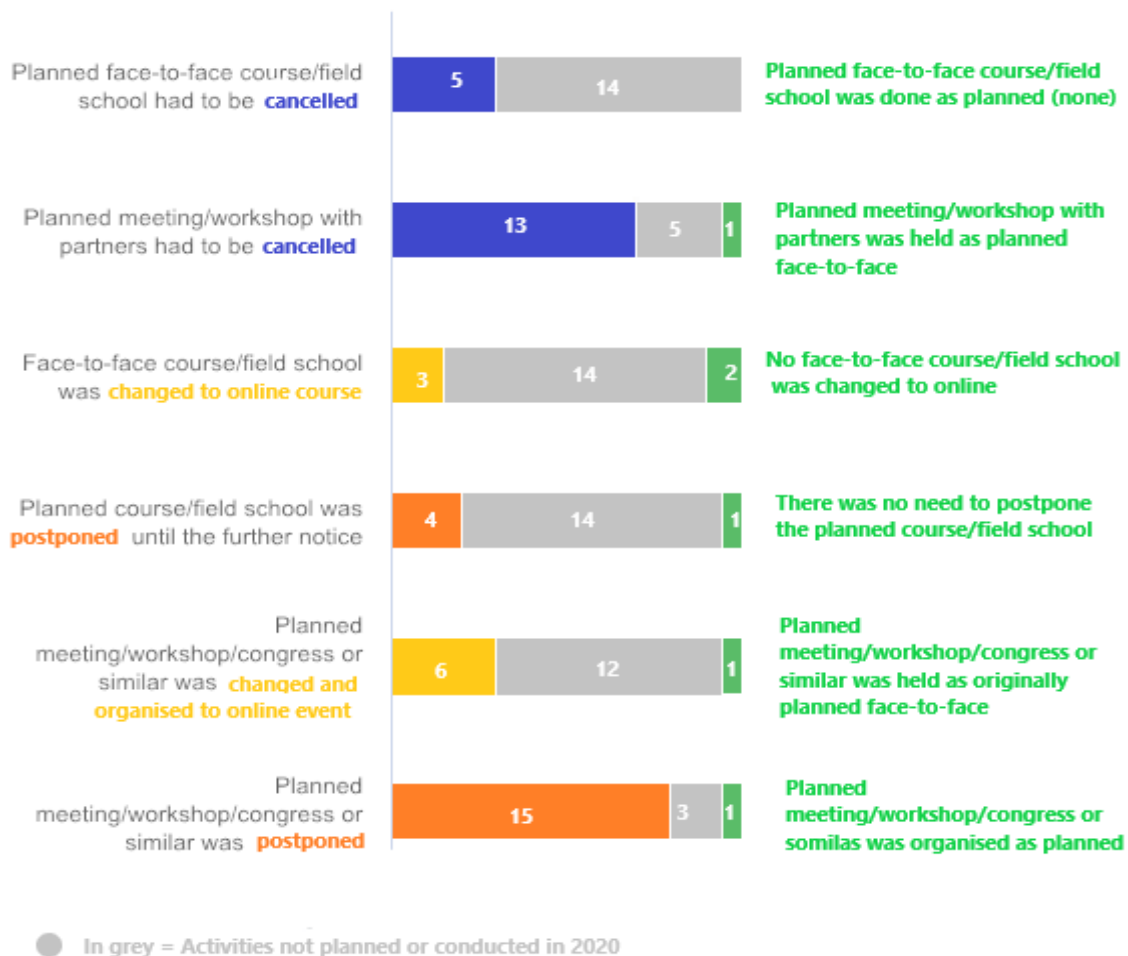


Figure 1 - Educational Activities



Finally, 7 respondents were not able to conduct the planned research while only 5 could do that. The remaining respondents (n=7) did not plan or conduct any research during 2020 (see Figure 2).

Five respondents affirmed that the field work in relation to their research was conducted entirely by them, while 3 stated that certain parts/all of the research work was conducted by local or Indigenous persons living at the research site. The remaining respondents (n=11) did not plan nor conduct this activity. Eventually, 2 respondents did not get any assistance for their field work from the staff located at the site/research station. On the contrary, 4 were assisted by the staff of the station. Thirteen respondents did not plan nor conduct this activity during 2020 (see Figure 2).



Figure 2 - Research Activities

Issues which worked better/worst during the Covid-19 pandemic

The aim of Question 12 was to look at whether any issues worked better during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A certain number of TNs highlighted how meetings online worked well and were better organized creating new possibilities for networking. In general, people are said to be more familiar with online video-call platforms so that communications appear to be easier than before. Some TNs also praised the increased time availability to work on research and develop new online contents.

Half of the answerers did not see any issues' improvements.



On the contrary, Question 13 investigated whether any issues worked worst during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Many respondents agreed on the fact that cancellation, postponement and/or online moving of meetings, conferences and workshops prevented them from effectively communicate, collaborate, present data, exchange information and network. It was said to be especially true for many emerging young Arctic scientists. One respondent noted how an online summer course was cancelled due to the low number of students participating who would like to take part in a 'real Arctic experience' instead.

Some stressed the difficulties to access remote Indigenous communities and highlighted the obstacles due to the lack of a stable internet service as well as internet high costs for communities and small groups living in the Arctic region. The potential of online events was also challenged by Arctic communities' different time zones. Also, several respondents expressed the need to supplement TNs with online solutions and enable digital innovations to host international meeting.

Some answerers stressed the increased number of tasks and responsibilities of the personnel due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, a number of respondents noted how they were prevented from conducting field work and how samples' transport was not ensured during year 2020.

New ways of operating or conducting activities initiated by TNs or which TNs would like to implement in the future

The Question number 14 explored whether new ways of operating or conducting the activities were initiated or would like to be initiated by TNs if the pandemic continues in 2021.

In general, most of the respondents answered that online meetings/conferences, remote-participation webinars, workshops and virtual reality have all been new (and the most common) ways of conducting activities since the pandemic outbreak. Online platforms (as YouTube) have been employed to create and share online contents.

In the future, some of the answerers plan to find new methods of remote participation, although lack of stable connection and different time zones for small spread out groups are still major obstacles. Many respondents aim to have mixed forms of meetings (both online and in person) in the future, as physical presence is still considered an advantage in many cases. Besides a possible prolongment of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is the idea that online meetings due to travel limitations will still be required in the near future in an effort to mitigate the risks posed by climate change. Hence, some TNs would like to find new ways to financially support the access to internet services for experts from remote Arctic communities.



Still, TNs especially dealing with field work strongly fear that their research activities will worsen if Covid-19 continues despite the efforts to organize Summer schools, workshops etc. online.

UArctic and Thematic Networks Office support to TNs and Institutes

Last question of the survey (Question 15) investigated how UArctic and Thematic Networks Office could provide better support to TNs and Institutes during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Several respondents (n=5) praised the support of UArctic so far, and they especially expressed approval for the website updates and the funding opportunities advertised in the social media outreach. Sharing both resources and opportunities and facilitating mentorship are considered important tools to partly overcome the challenges posed by Covid-19 outbreak. Some TNs (n=3) asked for help in coordination and in finding new finances or funding, while a new TN (n=1) asked for an extension of its probationary period.

The remaining respondents (n=10) were not sure about whether and/or how UArctic could support them better.



Covid-19 impacts to UARctic Thematic Networks and Institutes

The purpose of this survey is to collect information on how Covid-19 pandemic has affected Thematic Networks and UArctic Institutes operation, what news ways were implemented and how Thematic Networks office could support networks better. Results will be shared openly with all networks and UArctic website. Survey will be open until the end of August 2020.

1. Name of the Thematic Network/UArctic Institute *

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2. Contact information

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Name of the respondent | <input type="text"/> |
| Tel: | <input type="text"/> |
| Email: | <input type="text"/> |
| Home organisation | <input type="text"/> |
| Country * | <input type="text"/> |

3. What is your role in a Thematic Network/UArctic Institute

- Leader
- Vice-leader
- Coordinator/assistant

Member of the network

4. During 2020 (Jan-Dec) 2020 Covid-19 has affected the activities (either planned or current) of Thematic Network / Institute *



5. Please tell us in more detailed what and how activities were affected. Choose either the statement given in left (1) or right (5), if listed activity was not planned or conducted in 2020 please choose 3. *

The time frame is the year 2020. In case your planned activity was changed, please answer to the follow up question on the how many cases in question were/has to be changed. The follow up question shows up if your answer 1 for indicating the change in your activity.

| | 1 | 3 | 5 | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Planned face-to-face course/field school had to be cancelled * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Planned face-to-face course/field school was done as planned |
| Planned meeting/workshop with partners had to be cancelled * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Planned meeting/workshop with partners was held as planned face-to-face |
| Face-to-face course/field school was change to online course * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | No face-to-face course/field school were changed to online |
| Planned course/field school was postponed until the further notice * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | There was no need to postpone the planned course/field school |
| Planned meeting/workshop/congress or similar was changed and organised to online event * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Planned meeting/workshop/congress or similar was held as originally planned face-to-face |
| Planned meeting/workshop/congress or similar was postponed * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Planned meeting/workshop/congress or similar was organised as planned |
| We were not able to conduct the planned research * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | We were able to conduct the planned research |
| Field work in relation to our research was done completely by us * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Some parts/all of our research work was conducted by local or Indigenous persons living at the research site |
| We did not get any assistance for our field work from the staff located at the research station/site of our work | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | The staff at the field site/research station assisted by collecting the data needed or by doing the research as planned |

